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Advocating and promoting veterinary medicine, while enriching animal and human health

Assembly Committee on Agriculture

Testimony

In support of Assembly Bill 166

May 14, 2009

Good morning Chairperson Vruwink and distinguished members of the Assembly Committee on Agriculture. My name is Dr. Bob Klostermann, I own and practice at Middleton Veterinary Hospital in Middleton, WI. It is my privilege to appear before you this morning on behalf of the 90 percent of licensed veterinarians in Wisconsin who belong to the Wisconsin Veterinary Medical Association. We respectfully ask for your support of Assembly Bill 166.

First, allow me to thank those of you who have already signed on as a cosponsor of Assembly Bill 166, as well as thank Representative Mark Radcliffe and Senator Kathleen Vinehout for their leadership in introducing this measure.

If approved, Assembly Bill 166 would repeal the requirement that veterinarians and certified veterinary technicians obtain continuing education in order to use or direct the use of over-the-counter pesticides. It would also rescind the requirement that a veterinary clinic receive a permit through the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection if someone in the clinic uses, directs the use or repackages pesticides.

The fact that veterinarians and CVTs only use pesticides for medical purposes should be enough to preclude special regulatory oversight. That being said, it is also important to understand that the veterinary use of pesticides is for flea control in companion animal practices and lice and mange control in food animal practices.

And, since 1987, when these laws were established, pesticide use in the veterinary practice has changed significantly. Today, instead of dipping a dog in a bathtub full of pesticides to manage fleas, a small spot-on of medicated oil is placed on the fur. In food animal practices, the producers almost always apply the pour-on pesticides instead of the veterinarian.

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Furthermore, Wisconsin's law pertains to general use pesticides – pesticides that are sold over-the-counter. Anyone of you can purchase and use the very pesticides that veterinarians and certified veterinary technicians in Wisconsin are required to take special tests to use.

Federal laws that regulate restricted and general use pesticides already exempt veterinarians from special training and testing. In commenting on the exemption of veterinarians from federal laws relating to restricted-use pesticides, the Federal Food and Drug Administration commented that **veterinarians have taken enough courses to understand how to read a label and appropriately apply pesticides.**

In addition to the Wisconsin Veterinary Medical Association, AB 166 is supported by the Wisconsin Veterinary Examining Board. Administrators of the pesticide laws at the Agricultural Resource Management Division at the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection have carefully reviewed this bill and do not oppose it.

In closing, let me again thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak in support of Assembly Bill 166. I will be happy to respond to any questions you may have.



KATHLEEN VINEHOUT

STATE SENATOR

Testimony in support of AB 166
Assembly Committee on Agriculture
May 14, 2009

Thank you Chairperson Vruwink and Committee Members for the opportunity to provide testimony on Assembly Bill 166.

I authored AB 166 with Rep. Radcliffe at the request of the Wisconsin Veterinary Medical Association. Last session, I worked with Rep. Doc Hines to advance the same legislation but unfortunately, it did not pass both chambers before adjournment of the Legislative session.

AB 166 is a common sense bill that will help veterinarians. Under current law, Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection must license veterinary clinics that use or sell pesticides. Current law also states the Veterinary Examining Board must require training and continuing education for veterinarians and certified veterinary technicians in the use of pesticides.

The "pesticides" being referred to are essentially the flea and tick medicines that most people purchase over the counter or over the internet for use on their pets. It also refers to pesticides used as a pour-on by farmers for certain food animals.

This bill allows veterinarians to use over-the-counter pesticides without the burdensome pesticide applicator licensing process. Currently, we allow pet owners to use these pesticides, but for some reason we require veterinarian to be licensed. The licensure is burdensome and unnecessary. The bill also eases the training and continuing education requirements.

If you have been involved with agriculture long, you know there is a worsening shortage of large animal veterinarians. This bill will help keep those large animal vets in the barn instead of filling out paperwork.

Again, thank you for your consideration of AB 166. It is my hope that we can help veterinarians and the farmers they serve. I urge you to recommend the bill for passage.